

**School of Computer Science
Course 15-391**

Spring 2007

Final Consulting Report

Community Day

Grant Bartlow



Executive Summary

Student Consultant, Grant Bartlow
Community Partner, Jordan Hoover

I. Background Information

Community Day is a private Jewish school in Squirrel Hill. With 47 teachers and 27 staff members, the K-8 school teaches 306 students.

[Their] goal is to provide our students with the tools to grow to their full potential as educated, committed and ethical members of society and with a strong bond to K'lal Yisrael (the Jewish People) and the State of Israel.

Some teachers have little experience with computers, with only basic Word and Internet skill. The administration is comfortable with technology.

The school relies on email for most of their communication. Their previous email host was unreliable, costly, and buggy. As a result, only 44 out of 74 people at Community Day checked their inboxes at least once a day.

The school website cannot be updated because the web host went out of business. As a result, parents and donors cannot check the website for alerts or upcoming events. The school hired Darim Online, a web host that specializes in website for Jewish organizations, to develop the new site.

II. Consulting Tasks

Because Community Day relies on email for both internal and external communication, the first priority was to transition to a new email host. To complete this task, I identified problems and needs, investigated possible email hosts, got approval with the administration to transition to the new host, implement the solution, and integrate the new service with the organization.

Another task seen as a high priority was the changeover in web hosts. Even though Darim Online was hired to design the site, there were still many issues that had to be resolved. For this task, I coordinated the initial content authoring and uploading, trained selected staff members to use Darim's content management system to update and create pages, and worked with teachers and administration to develop an official updating plan.

III. Outcomes Analysis and Recommendations

Task 1: Email Services

The email task was very successful. Only six teachers do not check their inboxes daily. The organization believes this improvement in parent-teacher communication will benefit the quality of education of its students. The document of needs for the email host was created by observing problems with the old host, and meeting with teachers and administration to field requests. When investigating possible hosts, email, web research, phone calls and software demos led me to believe Google Apps was the best choice. It fulfilled the needs of the organization and offered additional

features. However, its most interesting element was its price, because Google provides it service for free to any K-12 school. After meeting with the Head of School, the email service was implemented. School logos and color schemes were integrated into the interface, and 74 accounts were made. To complete the task, teachers and staff were given new passwords, and administrative tools allowed Jordan to identify teachers who had not logged on. These teachers were assisted in the transition by getting a brief walkthrough of the main processes.

Task 2: Reviving the Website

Although the initial goal of bringing the new website online was not reached due to delays at Darim Online, the important issues in the transition process have been addressed. New content authoring for the website has been coordinated. Staff members were selected to write specific pages in MS Word. After being reviewed, these pages were converted into HTML using Darim's content management system, and uploaded to Darim's server. Only a few pages are outstanding, and over 20 have been created. Staff with computer proficiency from the faculty and administration were selected to be responsible for updating the site. These people were trained to use Darim's content management system with WebEx demos, and then showed capability by creating and editing pages. An official updating plan was developed. Each person with training was given a category of pages to maintain. Only Jordan and the Head of School are able to make changes to the sight, so all pages are reviewed before they go online.

Recommendation 1: Teacher Web Pages

The organization should strongly consider adding teacher pages to the website. Parents are interested in who is teaching their children, and teacher pages could bring more traffic to the site. Because the website is going to include news and important information for parents, the organization should seek any traffic gains within reason. Teachers should design the pages with the target audience of the parent, rather than including links or information for students, because student traffic is not a priority, and those resources can be distributed in the classroom. A pilot program of interested teachers could be used to understand hidden problems and the extent of increases in traffic. This task may show to be particularly difficult because many teachers have little technology experience, and the task will seem too difficult.

Recommendation 2: Email Memos

Community Day should also begin to send out daily memos through email rather than paper. Teachers will be forced to check their inboxes every morning to get the most recent news. Because the administration believes teachers will be better communicators by checking email more often, the school should pursue this as an easy way to get the remaining teachers to adopt email communication. Memos should be personalized to prevent teachers from just asking an associate if there was anything important. A significant challenge to this recommendation is the personalization. The authors of these memos will have to decide what different groups within the organization need to know.

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Community Day
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About the Consultant
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Grant is a junior in Computer Science.
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Student Consultant, Grant Bartlow
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I. About the Organization

Organization

Community Day is an independent K-8 Jewish day school that draws from all Jewish backgrounds and affiliations.

[Their] goal is to provide our students with the tools to grow to their full potential as educated, committed and ethical members of society and with a strong bond to K'lal Yisrael (the Jewish People) and the State of Israel.

Facilities

The school is located at the intersection of Forward Avenue and Beachwood Boulevard. The building is four stories tall and features 34 classrooms, computer labs, a gymnasium, an administrative wing, and playgrounds.

Programs

Community Day is divided into the Lower School for students in grades K-5 and the Middle School for students in grades 6-8. There are 306 students in the two schools.

The Lower School promotes a curriculum designed to help students create connections between concepts, develop skills, and foster educational responsibility. The Middle School promotes a curriculum designed to expand students' horizons, build a foundation of academic excellence, and establish a Jewish identity.

Creative expression, exploration of the arts, and technology proficiency are integral parts of the learning at Community Day. The school also offers a wide-range of extra-curricular activities including sports and clubs.

Staff

The staff at Community Day is composed of 47 teachers and 27 administrators and staff members. Teachers use computers in the classroom for educational management (attendance, grading, etc.) and educational enhancement. The results of a recent survey show that while some teachers show computer aptitude, many lack the basic skills to integrate technology into the classroom. Most are not experienced with PowerPoint or Excel, but all have some experience with Word. There is currently no formal technology training program in place.

The administrators use computers to manage and access database information. There are currently no problems with technology literacy in the administration.

Technical Environment

Classrooms are outfitted with eMacs running OSX with connection to the Internet. Many of these eMacs are connected to a digital projector. Those that aren't can request one for the day. Each class

has a printer. Classroom computers are networked to a server that runs the educational database, including the attendance software. Most of these machines only have Safari installed.

The administration uses PCs for office work.

Technical Management

Jordan Hoover is the Technology Director. He is the first person teachers or administrators go to for trouble-shooting. Jordan gets only 1-2 calls a day, with nearly all calls being solved with a simple 5-10 minute solution. He maintains the servers by continuously checking the logs. He is also in charge of the school website, including the content management. Jordan is the editor of the school newsletter, which is available online and is the most reliable way to get information to parents. For important events, he also sends out mass-emails. Finally, Jordan teaches a couple of classes a week.

When Jordan is not available, Vanessa Cohen is the best technology resource for other teachers. She teaches computer skills to students in the Lower School.

Technology Planning

Jordan is given the freedom of creating a technology plan on his own. He is given an annual budget set by the school board, and he has many short and long term plans.

Jordan reports to the Head of School and the Chief Financial Officer, as well as the Board. While the final plans must be first approved by the school Head and the Board, Jordan's technology background speaks loudly.

Internal and External Communication

Community Day relies on emails and its website to reach benefactors and parents. Both the email and the website were hosted by Wisper USA.

Most internal communication is done by email. About half of the teachers checked email at least on a daily basis, while administrators check much more frequently. Email accounts only afford 12 MB of storage. Most teachers used the web interface provided by the email host to check mail because it was easy to use, but the administration preferred Thunderbird because it allowed them to archive old emails. However, emails archived with Thunderbird were only available on the work computer, so the administration could not check their email at home. Daily memos containing the day's important information were distributed in the mornings, and phone calls are common.

Furthermore, their email server was unreliable and recently crashed losing all stored data. About 5% of messages bounced back for unknown reasons, suggesting network issues on the server side. The web interface often timed-out when sending long messages. They were paying \$4 per account per month, with a total annual cost over \$3500. Finally, the server was not always even online, bringing a halt to all email communication, including alerts to parents and donors.

The firm that hosted the school website stopped maintaining the site. Often times, the site would become unavailable, and there would be nobody at Wisper USA to respond to calls or complaints. During the time I spent at Community Day, the school website was down most of the time. While the website was still up, the content management software was no longer functioning and could not be changed. As a result, the website offered no news, information on future events, or staff pages.

Because the website could not be changed, the school used email to notify parents and donors of important information. However, recent history has shown their email host to be unreliable.

Community Day has chosen to hire a new web host for the website. After reviewing price bids, demos, and customer satisfaction, Darim Online was hired because of its specialty with Jewish

organizations. They had already made a design prototype which had been approved by the board, and the website is currently in development.

The new website will offer a WYSIWYG content management system. This will best match the needs of the school, because it is inefficient to train all of the potential content submitters to learn html or some other coding practice. The new content management system will enable Community Day to get any important information and class news to parents without resorting to email. A consultant from Darim will come in after the website is completed show users how to update the site.

Information Management

The administration uses The Financial Edge to manage accounting data and The Raiser's Edge to manage donor information.

The teachers rely on FileMaker to store educational information, including student personal education, attendance, and grades. Jordan is responsible for creating these databases. Unfortunately, these 23 databases are all independent within FileMaker, and they cannot share information. For example, when new report cards need to be made, each student's name, homeroom teacher, and grade are manually entered as opposed to being transferred.

Community Day is now in the process of changing their information management by hiring Blackbaud to install Education Edge, a utility that will help to bridge all of the FileMaker databases with the other two Blackbaud programs.

II. Scope of Work

Task 1. Email Services

Community Day relies heavily on email for communication between teachers, staff, and parents. Unfortunately, their previous email service provider had proven to be unreliable, with the email server mysteriously bouncing back ingoing and outgoing messages about 5% of the time. The web client was lamented by many of the teachers because it seems to time out when writing long messages. Finally, the server recently crashed, and all old messages and distribution lists were lost. There were no server-side backups, so all distribution lists had to be manually reentered.

Without a reliable email host, the occasional communication breakdown between the school and parents creates a lack of involvement from the parents, which could be affecting the quality of education. Because education is the most important goal of the organization as stated by the mission, Community Day had to find an email solution as soon as possible.

A higher use of email services does more than just improve the communication of the organization. Information stored in emails will be accessed easier through searches compared to phone calls or old memos. However, staff will have to learn and adapt to a new interface.

To complete this task, I had to

- Identify problems and needs
- Investigate possible solutions
- Get approval from the Chief Financial Officer and the Head of School
- Implement the solution
- Integrate the solution into the work processes of the school

Task 2. Reviving the Website

Without a “living” website, it was difficult for Community Day to effectively communicate with parents, volunteers, and donators. With the exception of the school newsletter, no information could be added to the site. Teachers could not put class news on the site. Important announcements were forced to be made by email, which was unreliable because of server problems.

Convenient external communication is necessary for Community Day to reach its goals. A website would help to make fundraising opportunities and school announcements more public. It could bring in more money and help parents to better cooperate in the students’ education.

There were still many tasks left to be completed before this website could become a reality. New content still needed to be generated and uploaded, the staff needed to be trained on how Darim’s authoring tools work, and the organization needed a formal web site updating process.

To complete this task, I had to

- Coordinate the content authoring for the initial site
- Train the staff for updating
- Develop an updating plan

II. Outcomes and Recommendations

Task 1. Email Services

Community Day has switched to a new email host. The process had five major steps.

Identify problems and needs

Jordan and I made a preliminary list of needs we believed were necessary, and then checked with a selection of teachers and administration. Here are the identified needs:

- The server needed to have guarantees on its availability.
- The business must be trusted to stay in business for a long time to prevent exit costs.
- Standard email features including spam filtering, distribution lists, and large file attachments should be available.
- The web interface needed to be easy-to-use so the faculty and staff could transition with little effort.
- Email accounts needed to provide more storage than the previous 12 MB.
- There should be easy administration utilities, like account management and usage statistics.
- The email services should be as cheap as possible without losing reliability and usability.

Investigate possible solutions

I looked at many different email hosts, including SharpSchool Email, ePals School Mail, Fuse Mail, WebMail.us, and finally Google Apps. Investigation included research, phone calls with representatives, and, in some cases, WebEx demos. Google Apps, which is built on the widely popular GMail, interested us the most.

Google is certainly a trusted email business because of the success of GMail. They guaranteed 99.9% server uptime, and messages actually reach their destinations. The GMail interface, including logging in, sending, and receiving, is very simple and similar to the previous web interface without the time-outs.

Google offers a strong privacy policy, stating that no human will ever read emails of its users.

Community Day's old email host only offered 12 MB of storage. People who used email frequently downloaded email into archives onto their work computers. Google Apps guarantees to give each user 2 GB of storage in their terms of services contract. As a result, almost all users are able to archive all old emails online. This makes information management simpler because old information can be easily found without checking archived downloads. In addition, since the archives are online, the information can be accessed at other computers, including the home computer. Before, most teachers just used email for short-term communication. Now, they can look up what was in a memo from last year.

Google Apps features interesting administrative tools, including interface customization to have Community Day's logo and colors, capacity monitoring, and account creation and management.

The biggest reason Google Apps was chosen is because it was offered completely free to K-12 schools, like Community Day.

Google Apps also featured Google Calendar, Google Talk, and document management services. Google Calendar is a tool that is designed to replace daily planners. Each user has a calendar to which he can add events or reminders. Calendars are meant to be easily shared, so a group of people can schedule a meeting during available time. Google Calendars also has a room management feature that allows important information on each room for any time including availability, expected number of guests, equipment needed, etc. Google Talk is an instant messaging client that runs in the browser. It provides added functionality by storing conversations in the email archive of the user, so conversations can be searched and found just like emails.

Google is bound by a two-year contract to continue to give increased storage and server availability. Hypothetically, after two years, Google may decide that they cannot afford to offer these services for free to schools or maybe they want to leave this business entirely. To prevent the threat of lock-in, there are many applications that Jordan can use to export email and distribution lists off of the Google servers.

Get Approval

Before any major changes are made to the work processes including email must be approved by the Head of School. After finding a robust and simple email solution that was free, the CFO did not even need a meeting to approve the transition. The Head of School met with us to go over the features, and she was as excited as we were.

Implement the Solution

Implementing Google Apps was very simple. After signing contracts and going through a school verification period, Community Day was given a school account on Google Apps. The administrative utilities allowed for easy account creation. The web interface was then customized to feature Community Day's logo and color scheme.

Integrate the Solution

With accounts set up, teachers were given new passwords to activate the new accounts. Many teachers were reluctant to switch to the new service, even after the old host was dropped due to the struggle of understanding a new interface. These users were identified using Google Apps' administrative tools, and these teachers were guided through the process.

Before the switch to Google apps, only 44 out of 74 Community Day staff members checked email daily. Now, because of the quicker, better web interface and improved reliability, 68 members check their email daily. More staff members use the technology for communication. As staff members become increasingly adjusted and comfortable with Google Apps, more staff members will rely on email for communication, and thus check it more often. In addition, as other staff members increase their email use, reluctant users will be forced to check email more often due to the increased level of internal email communication. Therefore, this outcome is sustainable, and the results are expected to improve over time.

Google apps was initially seen as just an email solution, but other features including Google Calendar, and Google Talk. Google Calendar and Google Talk have gone nearly unnoticed due to compatibility issues with the Safari, the standard Mac internet browser. These features work with Firefox, so those interested have downloaded Firefox. Teachers and staff know about these features,

but there is little use for them because many already use daily planners, and phone calls are too common for instant messaging to become popular. The room management system on Google Calendar has been used to plan out the gymnasium status. Community Day often rents out this space to other organizations, and must maintain reservations and requested space arrangements (tables, chairs). Before, all information was kept by pencil and paper because changes could be made easily without software training. Now, Community Day uses Google Apps for this task because of the simplicity of the interface. This is an example of how Google Apps has given Community Day new vision in how technology can improve work processes.

Task 2. Reviving the Website

The new website is nearing completion and will appear online by the end of the school year. However, there were many positive outcomes to this task.

New Content Authoring Coordination

Darim created a navigational layout of the site after discussions with Jordan and the Head of School. All pages necessary for the new web site were defined through this layout. Against this full list, the pages that could be copied from the old site were identified. These pages were copied from backups of the current website and uploaded. Logical authors for new pages that needed to be created were notified. 80 Out of all of the pages on the new site, 40% of the pages were copied from the old site, 35% have already been written, and 25% need to be completed.

Staff Training

It took many different people to write the initial content, but many of the pages will not need to be updated on a regular basis. Community Day teachers and staff with technology expertise were selected to be responsible for maintaining the website. This staff received training through Webex demonstrations with Darim on how to use the content management system. After training, these teachers and administrative personnel were able to edit and create pages for the site. Each staff member received a set of pages to maintain, and a category of new content responsibility.

There is an official updating plan.

With a small staff of people trained to update the website, it was easy to plan how updates would be made. Each of the people trained were given a set of pages that they were required to maintain. The process involves first finding a need for content change or addition. No matter who sees the need, the person in charge of that section of the site is then asked to make an update. This requires the staff member to submit a changed or new page into a pending section of the online content management system. In practice, the only person who will review the pending pages before they become part of the website will be Jordan, but the Head of School also has the administrative permissions.

Darim Online is a reliable business that has been around for nearly a decade. Their contract has a five-year lifetime, and renewal is expected. However, if they choose to increase prices or remove services, Community Day can easily back-up and re-publish their information because of the simple web page authoring feature. Therefore, there is little threat of lock-in.

A significant threat to the sustainability of this task is whether or not the updating staff will feel motivated to keep the page current. Staff members may see the easiest solution to spending time updating pages to be leaving any time-sensitive information off the site. Unfortunately, this would counteract all of the work done to switch web hosts, and the new site would suffer from the same problems. The updating plan is meant to prevent this risk, but it only works as long as somebody

takes the responsibility to request an update. As long as Jordan keeps an eye on outdated or incomplete information, this issue will not be a problem.

Recommendation 1. Teacher Web Pages

With the new website, Community Day is getting more parents to check the website on a regular basis. However, there is currently very little information about each teacher available. The website gives parents each teacher's role and contact information. However, there is little beyond that for parents to get to know the people in charge of their children's education.

The new school website should be moving towards having a web page for each teacher. Teacher web pages should not be designed for students. Although it is possible that students will follow links or download materials from a teacher site, a teacher webpage better serves the organization by looking professional and building parents' confidence in the schools teachers. These parents would get to know their child's teacher better and also learn about future teachers. This encourages them to stay with the school and possibly donate in the future.

At first, only teachers comfortable with technology and interested in being on the school's website will be shown how to use Darim's authoring tools. As they create their pages, all content is easily reviewable by the administration before it becomes available over the Internet. Community Day should complete this pilot program by the end of the 2007-2008 school year, with at least five teacher pages.

After several teachers have their own web pages on the school site, it is important to then evaluate the addition to the website. If new pages received few hits, it would be unnecessary to push for the rest of the teachers to create their own websites. If the early program is successful, teachers could be asked to draft their own pages, with a goal of having each teacher represented by 2010.

Recommendation 2: Daily Email Memos

Some teachers are still reluctant to check emails. The administration believes that teachers will be better communicators if they use email more often because they can easily stay in touch with each other and parents. Also, parents are encouraged to email teachers with questions or comments about classes, so it is important for teachers to check their inboxes regularly.

Those teachers that do not check their email every day do so because they do not see the need according to a technology survey. All important internal communication can be learned through daily paper memos and word-of-mouth. The administration can force teachers to check email by sending daily email memos instead of the paper memos.

Email memos could be teacher specific by sending messages to only teachers on the appropriate distribution lists. Distribution lists can be created for each grade, subject, or responsibility. These lists can be created as needed. For example, only 5th-grade teachers may be emailed about a 5th-grade field trip. This will prevent teachers resorting to word-of-mouth instead of email, because they could not know if there was any specific information that they may be missing.

Daily email memos will force every teacher to check their email inboxes in the mornings, and hopefully this will also encourage them to send more emails out.

About the Consultant

Grant Bartlow is a junior in Computer Science with a minor in Discrete Mathematics and Logic at Carnegie Mellon University. After gradating, he plans to volunteer for the Peace Corps. Upon returning, he plans to be a high school Computer Science teacher.

Past Community Partners

4 Kids Early Learning Centers
Addison Behavioral Care, Inc.
Alafia Cultural Services
Alcoa Collaborative
Allegheny County Housing Authority
Allegheny General Hospital Pastoral Staff
American Association of University Women
Animal Friends, Inc.
Animal Rescue League
ASSET, Inc.
ASTEP-Grace Memorial Presbyterian Church
Auberle
Bedford Hope Center
Bedford Initiatives
Bethany House Ministry
Bethlehem Haven
Bishop Boyle Center
Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation
Borough of Crafton
Boys & Girls Club of Duquesne-West Mifflin
Boys & Girls of Wilkinsburg
Braddock Carnegie Library & Community Center
Braddock Redux
Brashear Association, Inc.
Breachmenders
BTC Center
Calliope: The Folk Music Society
Career and Workforce Development Center East
Carnegie Library of Homestead
Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh
Carnegie Science Center
Center Avenue YMCA
Center for Creative Play
Center for Hearing and Deaf Services, Inc.
Center of Life
Central Academy
Central New Development Corporation
Child Watch of Pittsburgh
Children Youth Ministry
Children's Museum
Christian Life Skills
Citizens to Abolish Domestic Apartheid
Community Day School
Community House
Community Human Services Corporation
Community Technical Assistance Center
Competitive Employment Opportunities
Conflict Resolution Center International
Consumer Action Response Team
CONTACT Pittsburgh
Creative Nonfiction Foundation
Dance Alloy
East End Cooperative Ministries
East End Neighborhood Employment Center
East End Neighborhood Forum
East Liberty Development
East Liberty Presbyterian Church
East Side Community Collaborative
Eastminster Child Care Center
Eastside Neighborhood Employment Center
Education Center
Every Child, Inc.
Fair Housing Partnership
Faison Development & Opportunities Center
FAME
Family Services of Western PA
Family Tyes
First Charities/First United Methodist Church
Friendship Development Association
Garfield Jubilee Association, Inc.
Gateway to the Arts
Girl Scouts - Trillium Council
Glen Hazel Family Reading Center
Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank
Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council
Greenfield Senior Center
Guide Runners
Gwen's Girls
Hazelwood Senior Center
Hazelwood YMCA
Heritage Health Foundation
Hill House Association
Hill/Oakland Workforce Collaborative
Himalayan Institute of Pittsburgh
Hope Academy of Music and the Arts
Hosanna House
Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania
HUB Downtown Street Outreach Center
Hunger Services Network
Interfaith Volunteer Caregivers
Jane Holmes Residence
Jewish Family & Children's Service
Jewish Residential Services
Joy-Full-Gospel Fellowship After School Program
Just Harvest
KidsVoice
Kingsley Association
Lawrenceville Development Corporation
League of Young Voters
Light of Life Family Assistance Program
Madison Elementary School
Manchester Academic Charter School
McKees Rocks Terrace
McKeesport Collaborative
McKelvy Elementary School
Mental Health Association of Allegheny County
Message Carriers
Methodist Union of Social Agencies
Miller Elementary School, Principal's Office
Mon Valley Initiative
Mon Valley Providers Council
Mon Valley Resources Unlimited
Mon Valley Unemployment Committee
Mon Yough Community Services
Mount Ararat Community Activities Center
NAACP National Voter Fund
National Alliance of the Mentally Ill
National Association of Minority Contractors /
Black Contractors Association
Negro Educational Emergency Drive
New Beginnings Learning Center
New Penley Place

Past Community Partners (continued)

Northside Coalition for Fair Housing	Rx Council of Western PA
Northside Institutional Children Youth Ministry	Salvation Army Family Crisis Center
Northside Leadership Conference	Sarah Heinz House
OASIS Senior Center	Schenley Heights Community Development Center
Opera Theater of Pittsburgh	Second East Hills Social Services Center
Operation Better Block	Sharry Everett Scholarship Fund
Orr Compassionate Care Center	Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church
Outreach Teen & Family Services	Southwest Pennsylvania Area Health
Parental Stress Center	St. James School
Pennsylvania Biodiversity Partnership	St. Stephen Elementary School
Pennsylvania Low Income Housing Coalition	Sustainable Pittsburgh
Peoples Oakland	Thomas Merton Center
Phase 4 Learning Centers, Inc.	Three Rivers Center for Independent Living
Pittsburgh Action Against Rape	Three Rivers Youth
Pittsburgh Citizens' Police Review Board	TLC-USA
Pittsburgh Foundation	Turtle Creek Valley Council of Governments
Pittsburgh Health Corps	Tzu Chi Wen Chinese School
Pittsburgh Interfaith Impact Network	Union Project
Pittsburgh Mediation Center	United Cerebral Palsy
Pittsburgh Social Venture Partners	Univ. of Pittsburgh - Division of Applied Research and Evaluation
Pittsburgh Toy Lending Library	Urban League of Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh Vision Services	Urban Youth Action
Pittsburgh Voyager	Ursuline Services
Pittsburgh Youth Symphony Orchestra	Vintage Senior Center
POISE Foundation	Weed & Seed Program, Mayor's Office
Program for Health Care to Underserved Populations	Wesley Center
Project Educate	West Pittsburgh Partnership
Providence Family Support Center	Wireless Neighborhoods
Radio Information Service	Women's Enterprise Center
Reading Is Fundamental Pittsburgh	Working Order
Regional Coalition of Community Builders	YMCA McKeesport
River Valley School	YMCA Senior AIDE Center
Rodef Shalom	Youth Fair Chance
Rodman Street Missionary Baptist Church	YouthBuild
Ronald McDonald House Charities of Pittsburgh	YWCA Bridge Housing
Rosedale Block Cluster	YWCA of McKeesport
Sacred Heart Elementary School	

Community Partner Information FAQ

(continued from back cover)

7. What does it cost to be a Community Partner?

The cost for participating in this experience is your time and your commitment to follow through as agreed. As leaders of community organizations, we know your time is of premium value. Those who have made this investment of time have reaped returns many times over.

8. What does the Community Partner have to offer Carnegie Mellon students?

- Students learn to structure unstructured problems. Community organizations are complex environments with complex problems. Your organization provides excellent environments in which to practice the art of structuring problems.
- Students come from different cultural backgrounds and most have never been in a nonprofit organization. They are practicing how to communicate across cultural differences and across technical knowledge differences. They need to be able to make mistakes and learn from them. Community partners provide a supportive relationship in which students can take risks and learn about how to communicate, how to relate, and how to maintain professionalism.
- Students get the opportunity to practice process consulting. They are learning that expertise is only as valuable as the ability to help others solve authentic problems. You provide a context in which students can practice these skills.
- We've found that Community Partners are very appreciative for the students' assistance. There is nothing more rewarding than to experience your efforts as valuable and rewarding for others. You provide that experience for students.
- Finally, you offer a glimpse into career opportunities in the nonprofit arena. Students learn to appreciate those who work in the nonprofit sector, and they grow to appreciate the role and function of community organizations. We hope this appreciation not only informs the choices they make in life, but also encourages them to care and give back to the community throughout their professional careers.

9. How do I become a Community Partner

Contact an instructor, Joe Mertz or Scott McElfresh. Send your contact information: name, title, name of organization, address, phone, fax, location of organization and your interest in being a Community Partner. You will have a telephone conversation and possibly an on-site visit. All organizations are considered, though preference is given to organizations providing services to a low-income community or a community at risk for falling into the "digital divide."

**Send email to
instructors@tcinc.org
(email preferred)**

**Or call
Joe Mertz: 412.268.2540
Scott McElfresh: 412.268.4859**

10. Caveats

- We do our best to ensure that students who sign-up for the class are committed to completing the class, however, occasionally, a student ends up withdrawing from the class during the semester. Typically, this happens when a student has under estimated the time they need for this class. We do our best to advise students so this does not happen. When it does happen, there is nothing we can do except to invite the Community Partner to participate in the following semester.
- The semester is short and the student has to do a lot of work in a short amount of time. For this reason, it is critical that you keep your scheduled appointments, do the work you agree to do, and maintain communication with the student. The student will need your feedback on reports quickly, often the next day. When we get to the final consulting reports, we will need fast turnaround time from Community Partners because we also need to get the reports published in time for the Community Technology Forum.
- If there is any chance that you think you will not be able to follow through with the requirements of this partnership, please wait until such time as when you are able to do it. Since the Community Partner is the focus for the student's learning, it is essential that the partnership be sustained for the semester.

Community Partner Information FAQ

1. What is the goal of the partnership in this course?

The goal of this class is to expand the capacity of the Community Partner to use, plan for, and manage technology, administratively and programmatically. The student is learning process consulting, project management, communication, relationship management, problem identification, and analysis.

2. As a Community Partner, what can I expect to happen?

Once you match with a student consultant, you will set a meeting schedule that you and the student will keep for the remainder of the semester. The student comes to your location for 3 hours a week. During this time you and the student work together. This is not an internship in which the student merely works on site. Rather, it is a consulting partnership in which you must work together to achieve your technology goals. The student facilitates a process that moves from assessment, to analysis of problems and opportunities, to defining a scope of work, to developing a work plan, to analyzing outcomes and finally presenting that analysis. As the Community Partner, you are the consulting client. You provide information and discuss that information with the student. But you are more than a client; you are also a learner. In process consulting the client "owns the problem" as well as its solution. The consultant facilitates the client in achieving that solution. The consultant doesn't "do for" the client. Rather, the consultant works with the client.

3. What types of activities are typically included in a scope of work?

Each scope of work is unique and depends solely upon the specific needs and opportunities of the individual Community Partner. Partnerships have focused on a wide range of activities, including: personal information management (how to use Windows, organize files, backup files, use various software packages, use time managers, use Palm Pilots and other personal information management tools, e-mail, etc.), developing a plan for how to train staff and how to incorporate knowledge and skill into job description, designing a local area network, implementing Internet connectivity, designing and developing a web site, determining effective data storage methods, analyzing the needs for an information database, designing and implementing a database, solving technical problems, designing a public community technology access center, determining the specifications for computers, developing disaster recovery plans, and more.

4. Who can be a Community Partner?

This course targets individuals playing an administrative or programmatic leadership role within a community organization. Typically Community Partners are Executive Directors, Directors, Assistant/Associate Directors, Coordinators, and Managers. But, we make the selection based on the organization and the role that the individual plays within that organization, regardless of title.

5. Why do you focus on organizational leaders?

For an organization to use information technology effectively, its leaders must have a vision for how it can support the organization's mission, they must be comfortable enough to integrate technology into their personal work practices, and they must know enough to budget, staff, and subcontract appropriately. By partnering one-on-one with a student consultant, the leader has a unique opportunity to build that vision, comfort, and knowledge, no matter where they are starting from.

6. What are the requirements for being a Community Partner?

- Hold a leadership role within your organization.
- Have a computer in your office or one you could or do use in your job.
- Reliably meet with the student consultant 3 hours per week, every week, for about the 13 weeks.
- Come to an on-campus gathering 2 times during the semester. Once at the beginning and once at the end.
- Share information about your organization with the student consultant.
- Read project reports prepared by the student and give the student immediate feedback.
- Complete a brief response form after reading each report and return to the instructor.
- Keep a log of consulting sessions and send to instructors twice during the semester.
- Read the final consulting report. Give feedback to the student immediately.
- Make a brief presentation at the end of the semester (with the student) at the Community Technology Forum.
(This is the 2nd on-campus gathering you are required to attend.)

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